

Alcohol and Diabetes

Key Points:

- If you choose to drink alcohol, **drink in moderation**: 1 drink/day for women, 2 drinks/day for men
- When drinking alcohol, make sure you know how to prevent and treat hypoglycemia.
- Be aware of **delayed hypoglycemia up to 24 hours after drinking alcohol**.
- Hypoglycemia can be mistaken as intoxication.
- Glucagon, a treatment for low blood sugar, may not work while alcohol is in your body.
- Wear **MedicAlert** identification when drinking.
- **Health risks of alcohol**: weight gain, hypertension, high triglycerides, liver/nerve/pancreas damage, dehydration, addiction, and impaired judgment
- Talk to your diabetes educator or healthcare professional if you have any questions.

What is a Standard Drink?



One Standard drink is:

- 12 oz. of Beer (5%)
- 5 oz. of Wine (12%)
- 1.5 oz. of Hard Liquor (40%)

Risk of Hypoglycemia

The **liver** is the organ that breaks down alcohol. It is also responsible for releasing sugar for the body to use when you're not eating. The liver is not able to release sugar when it is busy digesting alcohol. This is why drinking alcohol can increase your risk of experiencing low blood sugars especially if you take insulin or medications that cause insulin to be released (ex. glunorm, glyburide or diamicon).

- Be aware of **delayed hypoglycemia** that can occur up to 24 hours after drinking alcohol.
- Be aware of morning hypoglycemia if alcohol is consumed 2-3 hours after your dinner
- Even small amounts of alcohol may impair your ability to detect the symptoms of hypoglycemia.
- Glucagon, a treatment for low blood sugar, may not work while alcohol is in your body. Make sure that someone with you knows to call an ambulance should you pass out.

Before Drinking	While Drinking	After Drinking
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eat regularly • Check your blood sugars • Try to bring a friend who is not drinking to watch for symptoms of hypoglycemia • Carry fast-acting sugar to treat lows 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eat carb-containing foods • Do not take insulin for the carbs in your alcohol • Pour your own drinks • Drink water between alcoholic beverages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check your blood sugars before bed • Eat a carb-containing snack if your blood sugar is lower than usual • Wake up on time the next day and check your blood sugar